

# Moments in Time

SAUSALITO HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER SPRING/SUMMER 2008

This issue reviews SHS spring activities and launches readers into summer with a history of the July 4th parade.

## The 4th of July Parade

### How The Gates saved Independence Day

**B**ack in 1994, Sausalito Historical Society member Dorothy Gibson conducted an oral history interview with Bob Kalloch and Laurabell Hawbecker, who moved to the northern waterfront (known as The Gates) in the late sixties. During this discussion, Bob mentioned that Laurabell had been responsible for reintroducing, following a long absence, the 4th of July parade to Sausalito in 1975. In the following excerpts from the oral interview, Bob and Laurabell recall how this came about:

**Dorothy:** I understand that [Sausalito] hadn't had a 4th of July Parade for about 20 years.

**Bob:** I don't think they'd had one since the thirties or the twenties. There were two things that came together. One was that for several years in The Gates we'd had our own 4th of July celebration, as well as Easter and Summer Solstice celebrations. A lot of people put energy into these things, but Laurabell was the focal point, I think it's safe to say. And this particular year they were really getting up a big 4th of July celebration for just The Gates—from Gate 3 up to Gate 5. A poster that was made for the celebration in 1975 says there will be a dawn parade and then the main parade at 10:00, and it's to go from Gate 3 to Schoonmaker Beach [for] a potluck picnic. Laurabell had been working with Chris Hardman and his troupe's drill team and drum corps. They were getting their costumes, and it was coming along fine. But, in the meantime, Queva Lutz, who was the owner of the Tides Bookstore and head of the Chamber of Commerce that year, approached the City and said that the Chamber would like to have a 4th of July parade. There was a little bit more of a response from the City to the Chamber of Commerce than the waterfront people were able to get. So Queva Lutz called up Laurabell and said, "I understand you've organized a parade for the waterfront. Can we have your parade?" They talked about it and thought it would be a great idea for the waterfront and the City to get together because there was very little communication between the waterfront and the City at that time.

**Laurabell:** I'd gone around to every unit that was to be



PHOTO: JUDYTH GREENBURGH

Laurabell (note Gate 5 spelling of her name) Hawbecker poses with a sign acknowledging her as founder of Sausalito's 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade.

in the parade and I had drilled them all—the band and our marching corps—I drilled them for weeks before the parade. And then I went to the police station to get the okay and everything for the parade and they said they would block the streets off, and there would be a fire engine "to lead your parade."

And I said, "No, I'm going to lead this parade, and I'm going to be out in front with my baton because we're representing the waterfront to Sausalito." The policeman looked at me and said, "Well, fire engines always lead a parade," and I said, "But not this one." So he said, "All right, the fire engine will follow at the end of the parade."

I said I want the parade to stop at Dunphy Park and I want all my different units that want to [perform] to do it in Dunphy Park right after the parade. And they still are doing that, and after the parade the City and waterfront celebrate life together in Dunphy Park.

**Dorothy:** So after that first year, then the City took over and did it their way. But it's continued to have all these elements.

**Laurabell:** Oh, yes, the waterfront gets in it quite a bit.

—Researched by Larry Clinton

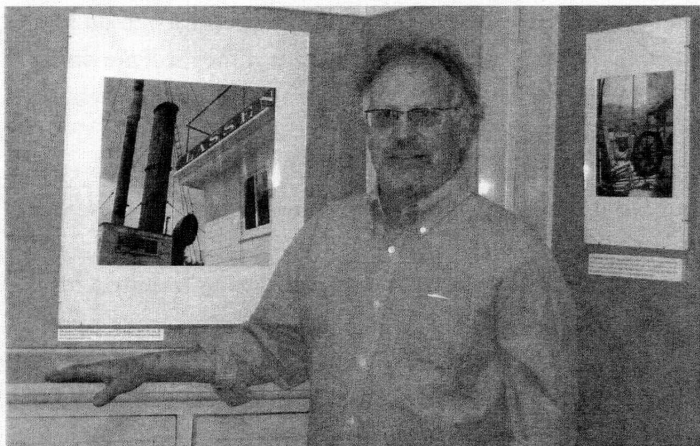
*The entire oral history covers many areas of Bob and Laurabell's fascinating life together. It is available for review at the Society's Phil Frank Research Room at Sausalito City Hall.*

# Standing Room Only at the Craig Sharp Photo Collection Opening

An overflow crowd filled the City Council Chambers on the evening of March 14 to listen to a presentation about life aboard the schooner *Lassen* in the 1940s and 50s when it was beached at the foot of Johnson Street. Attendees included many members of the photographer's family and their friends as well as Sausalitans interested in the waterfront and local art history. Liz Robinson, longtime contributor to SHS exhibits and events and knowledgeable about the post World War II art scene, led the discussion. Featured guest Leland Lewis answered questions about his recollections of the *Lassen* and the artists who lived aboard. Other contemporaries of Lewis and photographer Craig Sharp, including Larry Green, Jim Stockton and Betty Prange, daughter of Spencer Prange, shared Sausalito stories of the period.

Following the program, the crowd moved on to the main event of the evening in the Sausalito Historical Society Exhibit Room. The Craig Sharp Photographic Collection featured over 30 images of the waterfront, the *Lassen*, artists who lived on the *Lassen*, and other famous waterfront characters that Sharp photographed, such as Sterling Hayden and Jean Varda. Ten original portraits by Ted Christensen called the Lassen Series were also displayed.

Scott Sharp, son of the artist, had spent more than a year overseeing the printing of his father's negatives, researching each image and preparing them for presentation to the SHS as a donation to its permanent collection. In a closely collaborative effort including Doris Berdahl negotiating the gift, the SHS supporting printing costs, Margaret Badger and Wood Lockhart designing and hanging the exhibit, and Vicki Nichols organizing the reception, a very successful opening was celebrated. The exhibit will remain open for viewing during regular SHS hours (Wednesdays and Saturdays from 10–2) throughout the summer.



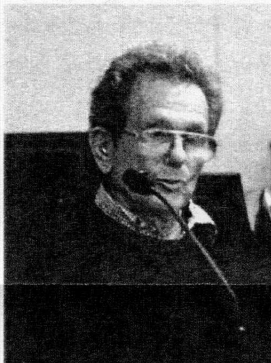
PHOTOS: MARGARET BADGER

# The Sunken Legacy at the Foot of Johnson Street

—by Leland Lewis

Leland Lewis of Carmel, now in his 80s, is the only living member of the artist's community that lived aboard the schooner *Lassen* in the years immediately following World War II. At our request, Lewis has written some of his recollections about the *Lassen* and his time living aboard in 1950. As a young man, Lewis spent a decade sailing the schooner *Ibalia* up and down the California and Baja coasts and to Hawaii and the Galapagos. He later distinguished himself as an author of short stories about the sea and wrote professional maritime books, including the *Baja Sea Guide* and the *Sea Guide of Southern California*.

## STEAM SCHOONERS ON THE WEST COAST



Leland Lewis

Around the latter part of the 19th century and the first three decades of the 20th, steam schooners took the place of sail, carrying a mixed cargo of supplies, lumber and produce from the many farms, lumber mills and cattle ranches along the west coast to points south. These rugged sea-going vessels plied the coastal waters from the Pacific Northwest to south of San Diego in all weather, loading and unloading cargo mostly by high wire in wave-crested dog holes and from rickety piers jutting from a mostly inhospitable coastline against which crashed unremitting ocean swells.

Steam schooners constituted the only available means of mercantile communication along that route in those years. Not only was there no other way to transport cargo, this was the most convenient conveyance for passengers traveling from one coastal homestead to another—particularly for those

**Legacy** (continued on page 3)

Scott Sharp, son of photographer Craig Sharp and donor of the photographs and graphics featured in the Craig Sharp Photographic Exhibit is seen with one of the photos of the historic lumber schooner *Lassen*. The one-time Sausalito landmark on which Scott's father lived with a community of artists in the period following World War II is a focus of the exhibit. Scott, who was born in Sausalito and attended the Sausalito Nursery School and Central School (later spending summers here in his teens), lives in Carlsbad in Southern California and is a landscape painter, photographer and art teacher. He has chosen the Historical Society as the repository for his father's Sausalito-based photo collection—83 items in all—because Craig Sharp, an award-winning commercial and fine art photographer who built a family home on San Carlos Avenue, maintained a long relationship with Sausalito through the 1950s, '60s and '70s.

bound for the few developed harbors serving the handful of cities along the coast.

These sturdy, mainly wooden-hulled vessels had a remarkable capacity to accommodate diverse cargo in their holds and thousands of board feet of milled lumber lashed on their decks. They were manned for the most part by an international mix of sea-seasoned hands—Norwegians, Swedes, Pacific Islanders, Greeks, and almost any dockside sailor in need of a berth who could be depended on to manage these vessels and their varied cargo safely and expertly in any weather. Travelers and business people looking for passage along the west coast respected these ships and their crews and counted on safe passage at a reasonable fare.

This maritime trade was adequately supported until well into the early 1930s; in fact, a few wooden-hulled coastal schooners, most of them now powered by diesel engines rather than steam, continued service into the era of World War II. However, the financial calamity of the Great Depression saw the demise of most of this salty fleet of battered sea-going veterans. By the mid-'30s, most of the fleet had been laid up in the Alameda Estuary in San Francisco Bay and elsewhere along the backwaters of the west coast. In the end, they found themselves abandoned as a viable financial investment in an emerging age of steel-hulled ships, railroads, and expanding highways accommodating fleets of fast cargo trucks.

## THE LASSEN

As the steam schooners slowly disintegrated in the mud of backwater bays, an unusually long-lived legacy of this bygone era was the *Lassen*. She was an example of the hybrid form—diesel-driven but reliant on steam for loading and unloading cargo—that had emerged in the early 1900s. In 1937, the *Lassen*, destined to be stripped for salvage, was driven bow first into the mud of the Arquez Shipyard at the foot of Johnson Street in Sausalito, her remaining wooden structure destined to rot in place. But in the meantime, she served as a convenient breakwater to insulate the shipyard from the growing modern yacht harbor immediately southward.

She was in compatible company. The Arquez yard, dating from before the turn of the 20th century, was itself

a vestige of a bygone era and mothered a motley collection of old barges, derelict fishing boats, rusting tugs and various hulls half repaired and in need of frequent pumping to stay afloat.

What met the eye of the beholder ranged from the picturesque to the unacceptable. It mattered whether the observer was an incurable romantic smitten with the lure of the sea and Sausalito's rich maritime history, or a city administrator with an eye on the bottom line. From this latter perspective, Sausalito enjoyed an enormous tourism potential; the Arques Shipyard and the rapidly deteriorating *Lassen*, with their accompanying band of questionable denizens, were an unsightly distraction, hence ripe for demolition and redevelopment.

## MY SOJOURN ON THE LASSEN

I luckily landed in Sausalito between jobs and, for the better part of a year, found a place to live aboard the *Lassen* in what had been the crew's quarters. Artists Loyola and Ed Fourtane had leased the pilot house as their living quarters and design studio and were renting out, for a small monthly sum, spaces to artists, writers and other unemployed types with lofty ideas of what mattered in life. The Fourtanes, primarily custom jewelers, did a promising business with Sausalito's rising tourist trade. The rest of us found part-time employment to keep things going, hoping for enough time to write and paint and whatever. Ted Christensen, a watercolorist with a considerable following in the art world, lived in the foc's'le with several of

Legacy (continued on page 6)



PHOTO: MARGARET BADGER

*The rusted remains of one of the Lassen's fuel tanks sits prominently in the mud near Pelican Harbor at the foot of Johnson Street during a low spring tide. A great blue heron stalks its next meal in the historic debris.*

# Images from the Craig Sharp Photographic Collection



The artists who lived on the Lassen occasionally found themselves the object of intense interest from the outside world. Here, in a letter which photographer Craig Sharp wrote to fellow artist and shipmate Spencer Prange following Prange's departure for art school in Los Angeles, Sharp pokes gentle fun at a group of East Bay ladies who visited his studio sometime in the late 1940s or early '50s—probably looking for the next Picasso.

## THE "ART" LOVERS VISIT THE LASSEN

"The Oakland Art Lovers" visited us yesterday in a flock. We astounded them and I twitched my beard - acted like Van Gogh - etc. C.S.



Craig Sharp's sketch of himself as Van Gogh.

# Images from the Craig Sharp Photographic Collection

PHOTO: CRAIG SHARP COLLECTION



PHOTO: SCOTT SHARP

*The insert photograph taken in 2008 shows the balloon barge on the right in the same location as it was in the 1950s Craig Sharp photograph. The Lassen is on the left and a Delta River boat is in the back center.*

## VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

Our thanks to Bob and Terry Woodrum of Sausalito Picture Framing for donating the matting, the cutting of the matting and the plexi-glass for the Craig Sharp Photographic Collection Exhibit and for expertly assembling each image into its frame ready for hanging.

*Bob and Terry Woodrum pictured with their son Henry in their framing shop on Caledonia Street.*

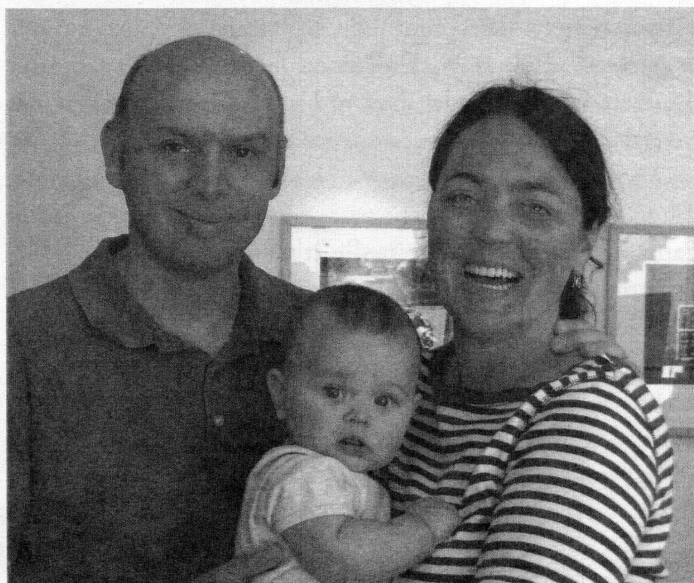


PHOTO: MARGARET BADGER

us. I remember a striking painting of his of a steeped church from the early 1900s. I wished for it at the time, but it sold to one of his collectors for enough to finance things for Ted for several months.

Most of us itinerant tenants worked for the ceramacist Edith Heath, whose pottery factory was located at the time on Bridgeway in the top two floors of what was to become the Village Fair (now the newest part of the Casa Madrona Hotel). I was the kiln man, and besides a myriad of other duties loaded and unloaded and fired the kilns. We were a happy, creative bunch, living from hand to mouth, “doing our thing,” and presaging the lifestyle that later caught on among the young people of the 1960s. After work, we took pleasure in holding bull sessions with our *Lassen* shipmates, often opening the trapdoor in the ship’s foc’s’le and fishing for our dinner in the harbor waters that washed through the gaps in her rotting planks. It was *de rigueur* at our occasional dinner parties to land, to the amazement of our guests, a flopping fish or two in our living room, and almost blasphemy to fry them in a pan for dinner. We were the 1950 Sausalito waterfront reincarnation of Joyce Cary’s “The Horse’s Mouth.”

The Fourtanés went on to join the landed gentry of Carmel, opening a custom jewelry shop in the fabled Pine Inn. Their exclusive shop flourished from the ‘60s to the ‘80s, trading on their reputation for having survived the very “hippy era” which they, of course, had helped to establish. The rest of us found our way back to civilized society, employing our earlier professional (i.e., employable) talents, raising families, acquiring mortgages and fast cars, and whatever else satisfied our lust for life. The *Lassen*, alas, collapsed slowly into the mud, most of its remnants carted off to the burn pile to make way for an upscale marina (today’s Pelican Harbor), sans rusty tugs, leaky barges and strapped tenants who thought they knew the ingredients of a better life. Ted Christensen, the uncommonly talented water colorist, went on painting, and years later mounted an invitational show of his collected works that was every bit as successful as it deserved to be.

Those who labor to preserve the past deserve our unstinting support, particularly the past of the still romantic town of Sausalito—although, admittedly, it marches today to a different tune and a different piper. I am glad to have been a part of the *Lassen’s* unique fraternity, even for so brief a time. I have no regrets except for the inevitable passage of time. Einstein had no solution for this dilemma save for an insightful theory, which I’ll roughly paraphrase: “It is far better to have had a robust imagination than a Wall Street salary.”

*Carl Nolte speaking at the annual fund raiser.*

## Annual Fund Raiser Sells Out

The Sausalito Historical Society presented *Ferry Tales—Sausalito: A Bustling Port of Call* to an over-capacity crowd on Wednesday evening, April 2, at the Spinnaker Restaurant. Last minute comers were standing at the door waiting to join in the cocktail hour, delicious sit-down dinner, and live auction.

The program for the evening described the turn-of-the-century period in Sausalito history when the town was a transportation hub serving as the prime connection between rural Marin and San Francisco. Before construction of the Golden Gate Bridge in 1937, trains carrying passengers to the water’s edge linked up in Sausalito with San Francisco-bound ferries to complete the commute to the City.

Guest speaker Carl Nolte, a reporter and editor at the *San Francisco Chronicle* for nearly 50 years and a fourth generation San Franciscan, has written many books about the Bay Area. His personal anecdotes at the fund raiser dinner spoke of his his life-long interest in maritime history, and in particular his passion for ferries. The *Golden Gate*, which made its last run about two years ago from Sausalito to San Francisco, was singled out by Nolte as a favorite of the countless residents and visitors whom it carried across Richardson’s Bay since its inaugural trip in 1970. According to Nolte, this reliable, unhurried transport, gliding through scenic splendor, provided the opportunity for many friendships to flourish. Its devotees have described the *Golden Gate* as the “Marry Ferry” for all those chance meetings that led to weddings,

**Fund Raiser** (continued on page 7)

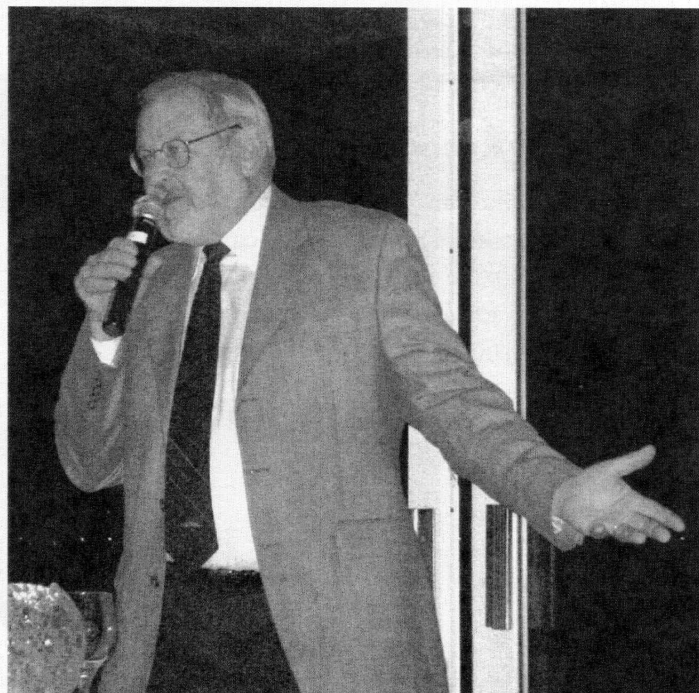


PHOTO: MARGARET BADGER

# Annual Meeting Summary and Election of New Board Members



PHOTO: TOM HOOVER

Retiring, continuing and new members of the SHS Board: (left to right) Kenn Roberts, Doris Berdahl, Carol Hayes, Patricia Stoppello, Steven Willis, Sharon Seymour, Susan Frank, Bob Mitchell, Larry Clinton, Phoebe Fielding, D.J. Puffert, Billie Anderson, Vicki Nichols, and Wood Lockhart.

At SHS's Annual Meeting on May 12, outgoing President D.J. Puffert summarized the current state of the Society. "The organization has taken on a look of its own during the last six years." This has included improved computerization; more discriminating accession methods and organization which benefit public access and the safe keeping of the collection; clearer financial reports that assist in smooth management of cash flow; a successful monthly lecture series and profitable fund raising events. The newsletter, *Moments in Time*, featuring original research on local history and coverage of the Society's activities is published regularly.

D.J. noted that the Society always welcomes more volunteers in the operation of its program. In particular, more regular and dependable docents are needed to staff the Research Room during public hours (10 AM to 2 PM Wednesdays and Saturdays). Committees that need knowledgeable volunteers from our general membership include Website, Accessions, Exhibits, Fundraising, Membership, Newsletter, Public Relations Facilities and Special Events. Interested volunteers may email [info@sausalitohistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@sausalitohistoricalsociety.org) or call 289-4117.

Board member Kenn Roberts told the gathering that the Society's finances are stable, with a bank balance of \$51,000 and liabilities of \$233. He pointed out that capital improvements to the Society's headquarters and expanded services have been accomplished "while keeping our financial house in order."

In his closing remarks, D.J. stated how proud he was to have worked with the outgoing Board members, most of whom have served for the maximum six years: Margaret Badger, Vicki Nichols, Billie Anderson, Phoebe Fielding, Wood Lockhart and Darlene Plumtree.

The new directors elected at the meeting are Susan Frank, Bob Mitchell, Sharon Seymour, Patricia Stoppello and Stephen Willis. Continuing board members are Doris Berdahl, Larry Clinton, Carol Hayes and Kenn Roberts. The board meets every second Thursday of the month at 7:00 PM in the history rooms on the top floor of City Hall. To address the board, interested parties should notify the secretary by phone at least 24 hours in advance.

—Reported by Larry Clinton

## Fund Raiser (continued from page 6)

babies and new generations of ferry riders.

The fund-raising event also featured a raffle and a live auction. Auction items included a catered wine reception at the Sausalito Historical Society Visitor Center, a tour of the Waldo Point floating homes community followed by refreshments, original art by Phil Frank and a long weekend in a furnished apartment in Venice Italy. In all, the event, organized by SHS board members Phoebe Fielding and Billie Anderson, raised \$4,580 for the Historical Society.

—Reported by Billie Anderson

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Sausalito Historical Society collects and preserves art, artifacts, photographs and printed materials that document Sausalito's history; provides access to the collection for public and academic research; and develops publications and outreach programs to inspire local interest in Sausalito's history and to educate the visiting public.

